Editorial

The 2015 issue of the *Journal of Belarusian Studies* is almost entirely about history. It focuses on the Belarusian-Polish-Lithuanian borderland and the period stretching from the uprising of 1863 to the inter-war period of the 20th century when the territory of today's Belarus was split between the Soviet Union and Poland. Two longer articles are followed by several essays which resulted from a conference held by the Anglo-Belarusian Society and other London-based organisations at University College London in March 2014.

The issue opens with an analysis of humour as a weapon of the political forces in Eastern Poland, what is now West Belarus, in the inter-war period. The article, by Anastasija Astapava from the University of Tartu in Estonia, explains the historical context of the 1920s and how various political groups were struggling for the minds of Belarusians by ridiculing political realities of that time. Rare pictures from inter-war periodicals richly illustrate the article.

Felix Ackermann, a DAAD Associate Professor at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, devotes his article to the Lukiškės prison in Vilnius. The prison was a hotbed of political struggle in the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a place of detention for scores of Belarusians, Lithuanians, Poles and other activists fighting for their causes in multi-ethnic Vilnius at that time. It was the only prison in the Russian Empire to incorporate Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Jewish places of worship at the heart of its infrastructure.

The subsequent four shorter articles resulted from the Kastuś Kalinoŭski and the Nation-Building Process in Belarus conference, which brought together over a dozen of scholars from Belarus, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and Poland. Kastuś Kalinoŭski is a national hero of Belarus who led the 1863–1864 uprising against tsarist Russia.

Aliaksandr Smalianĉuk, a Belarusian historian from Hrodna who is currently affiliated with the Polish Academy of Sciences, analyses the research problems which historians face when they tackle the historical role of Kastuś Kalinoŭski in Belarusian nation building. He argues that Kalinoŭski should not be seen as a creator or even a bearer of the Belarusian national idea but instead as a link in the gradual evolution of the Lithuanian idea in the 'Belarusian direction'.

Dorota Michaluk from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland analyses the Polish-language clandestine press published under the patronage of Kastuś Kalinoŭski around the time of the uprising against the tsarist authorities in 1863–1864. One of her findings is that the periodicals did not promote the idea of separatism of Lithuania and Belarus but instead called for national unity and the restoration of the whole of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Uladzislaŭ Ivanoŭ from the European Humanities University in Lithuania looks at the role of Belarusian Old Believers in the Kalinoŭski uprising. Old Believers were a Christian Orthodox sect who refused to accept church reforms in Russia in the 17th century and who after being persecuted settled in the territory of Belarus. The author shows how the Old Believers tried to reconcile their 'Russianness' with their 'Belarusianness'.

Andruś Unučak, Head of the Department of Belarusian Statehood at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, focuses on the image of Kalinoŭski in the official discourse of Soviet Belarus. According to the official line of the Belarusian Communist Party, Kalinoŭski supported a federation with Russia while the Belarusian intelligentsia tried to use the image of Kalinoŭski to strengthen Belarusian national consciousness.

This issue also includes the transcript of the first Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies, which was hosted by the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies of University College London in March 2015. Per Anders Rudling from the University of Lund in Sweden tracks the development of the Belarusian national idea from the 18th century to modern day Belarus.

The issue also includes two book reviews – one by Stephen Hall examining the meaning of Europe for the Belarusian and Ukrainian authorities, and the other by Siarhej Bohdan looking at relations between various ethnic groups in Eastern Poland in the inter-war period, which is now Western Belarus. Brian Bennett, Chairman of the Anglo-Belarusian Society and a former British Ambassador to Belarus prepared an overview of activities of the Anglo-Belarusian Society in 2014.

On 15 April 2015 Fr Alexander Nadson, a spiritual leader of the Belarusian diaspora in the West, a member of the Advisory Board of the *Journal of Belarusian Studies* and a former chairman of the Anglo-

Belarusian Society passed away in London. Fr Alexander left a legacy of not only religious texts and translations but also books and articles on various aspects of Belarusian studies. He authored the first article in the first issue of the *Journal of Belarusian Studies* on the writings of St. Cyril of Turau in 1965 and since 1973 served on its editorial board. His last article in the Journal was published in 2013. The obituary written by Jim Dingley and a bibliography of Fr Alexander's works in English conclude this issue.

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